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ABSTRACT

This study had two major objectives. The first was to determine if the effects of verbalization found by Taylor et al (1971) could be extended to a culturally disadvantaged junior high age population; the second was to determine if the effectiveness of verbalization is situation-specific, restricted to the particular list which is verbalized, or if verbalization may produce some more enduring change in the learner. Subjects were 40 primarily Black children enrolled in special education classes at two inner city junior high schools. Four treatment conditions were established, varying as to conditions of overtness of verbalization in the task. All groups were instructed to use imagery elaborations to learn two PA lists. Results yielded a significant difference between the experimental and control groups, with no significant differences between the two experimental or the two control groups. Verbalization appears to be an effective means of facilitating PA recall with self-generated imaginal elaborations for this population group. (Author/CKJ)

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The Effects of Verbalization of Transfer of an Elaboration Strategy

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A consistent finding in verbal learning is that the provision of a meaningful elaborative context greatly facilitates associative recall for both children and adults. It has been hypothesized (Rohwer, 1970) that the difference between successful and unsuccessful learners may be due to the use of effective learning strategies. The period just prior to senior high school may be critical in the development of effective learning strategies, since Bean & Rohwer (1970) did not find evidence of spontaneous utilization of effective learning strategies until senior high school.

If effective learning strategies can be specified and taught, the potential application to the education of EMR children appears promising. In recent years, there has been research directed to determine whether the associative recall of EMR children can be facilitated by the use of elaborative contexts. A basic issue in such research has been that of determining if EMR children have sufficient mediational ability to profit from the provision of elaborative contexts. It now seems (Milgram and Riedel, 1969) that EMR children can effectively utilize elaborative contexts, however research attempting to determine if EMR children can produce effective elaborations has had inconsistent results. MacMillan (1970) reports no significant difference between the control condition and the self-generated condition. Milgram (1968) finds the self-generated condition to be of borderline significance relative to a control condition. However, Taylor, Josberger & Knowlton (1971), using both imagery and sentence elaboration, found both self-generated elaboration conditions to be far superior to a control group. In an attempt to investigate the optimal conditions under which EMR children can produce elaborations, Taylor, Josberger, and Whitely (1971) found that verbalization of elaborations significantly facilitated PA recall in both imagery and sentence generation training conditions. Although the reasons for the effectiveness of verbalization are unclear, it appears to be a promising condition in assuring the production of effective elaborations by EMR children.

Since verbalization seems to have no differential effect on imagery and sentence elaborations, the current study used only imagery training. There are two major objectives in this study. The first was to determine if the effects of verbalization found by Taylor et al. (1971) can be extended to a culturally disadvantaged junior high age population, since this may be a population that will not spontaneously develop efficient learning strategies. The second objective was to determine if the effectiveness of verbalization is situation specific, restricted to the list which is verbalized, or if verbalization may produce some

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more enduring change in the learner. It was hypothesized that the relative advantage of a group which verbalizes on an initial PA list will be maintained on a transfer list in which no verbalization is permitted. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that verbalization on the transfer list will produce no additional facilitation of recall.

The subjects were 40 children enrolled in special education classes at two Minneapolis junior high schools located in a low SES area of the city. The vast majority of the sample were Black.

The subjects were randomly assigned to one of four treatment conditions, varying as to conditions of overtness of verbalization in the task. All groups were instructed to use imagery elaborations to learn two PA lists. Each list contained 15 pairs of concrete nouns. All groups received four practice pairs prior to List 1, and a 90 second interval between list 1 and list 2.

Two control groups were not permitted to verbalize on either the initial or transfer task. The first control group, received the same presentation interval as the experimental groups (15 seconds), while the control group received a 10 second presentation interval. Both experimental groups were to verbalize on List 1, but only one was permitted to verbalize on List 2.

Separate analyses of variance on the three dependent variables, List 1 recall, List 2 recall and gains score analysis, were conducted by using a set of apriori orthogonal contrasts. The results yielded a significant difference between the experimental and control groups, on both List 1 and List 2, with no significant differences between the two experimental or the two control groups. There were no significant differences in the gains score analysis, indicating that verbalization on List 2 did not further facilitate recall.

The results indicate that verbalization is an effective means of facilitating PA recallwith self-generated imaginal elaborations for a culturally disadvantaged EMR population of junior high age. It was found that the advantage gained by a verbalization group was maintained on a list in which no verbalization was permitted and that further verbalization did not produce any facilitation of recall. The lack of significant differences between the control groups indicates that additional time is not efficiently utilized in a no verbalization condition if there has been no previous experience with verbalization. However, the time is efficiently used when the subject has had previous experience with verbalization.

This finding is important educationally because the practical application of elaboration training would be severely limited in the classroom if overt verbalization was continually necessary to assure effective elaborations. Obviously, this study was not designed to test the long-term effectiveness of this relatively short training period utilizing verbalization, but it does demonstrate that verbalization is not situation specific. The intermittent use of verbalization according to a schedule of reinforcement may be needed to assure that the covert behavior of EMR children is as efficient as that which is found with verbalization.